



Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

**Fatal House Fire
8517 11th Avenue
Takoma Park, MD**

Incident Date: February 7, 2013



**Submitted by
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On March 3, 2013**

Incident Overview

Note: This post incident analysis is based upon the review of the incident audio tape, interviews with crews who operated at the fire scene and the completion and review of PIA Unit Fact Sheets.

On February 7, 2013, at 1045 hours, MCFRS units responded to 8517 11th Avenue, Takoma Park, MD for a report of a house fire with “one burned.” Weather conditions at the time of incident were clear and cold with a slight wind.

Company 2 units arrived on the scene to find a 2-story duplex-style structure with light smoke conditions showing from an open front door on the Delta-side unit. An adult male was found on the front porch holding an adult female in his arms that had been burned.

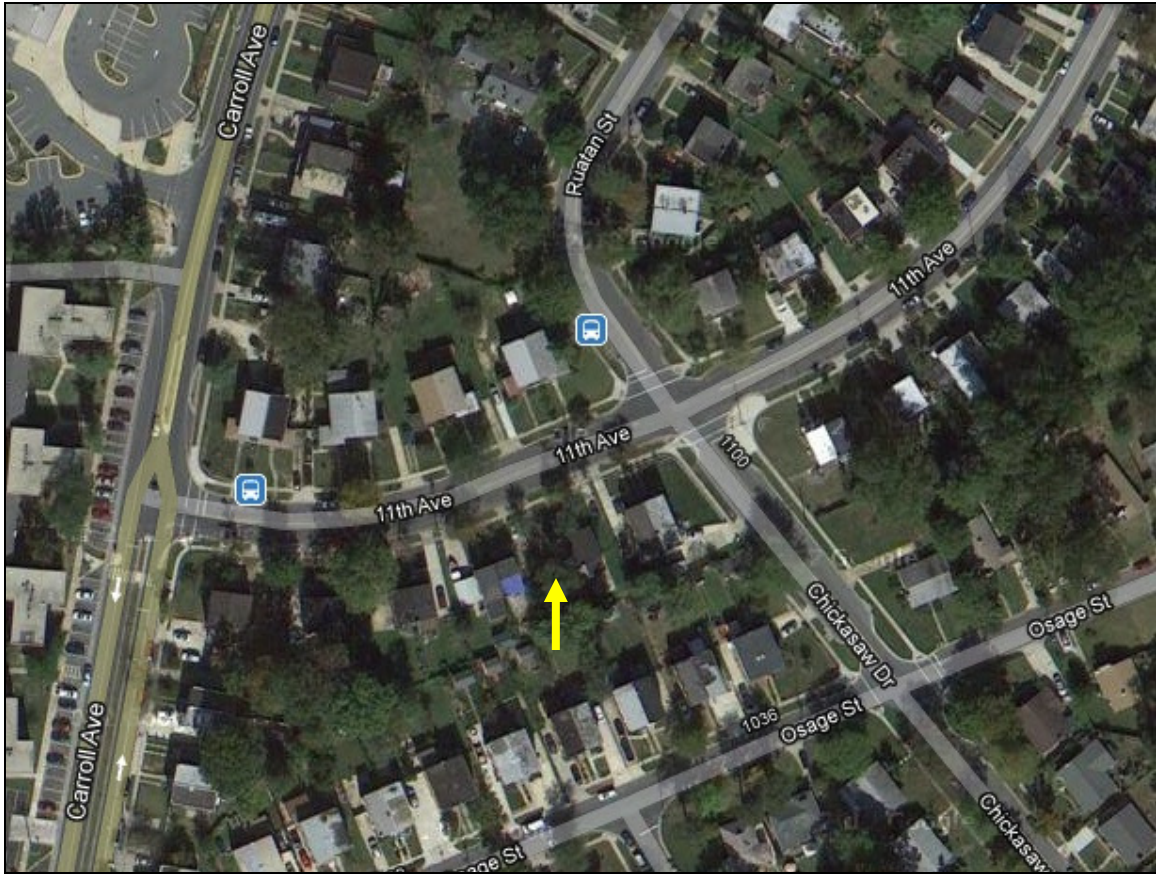
The burned adult female was quickly transferred to fire/rescue personnel for ALS care and transport and fire crews made entry into the structure and extinguished two small fires – one in the kitchen and one in the living room.

The burned female succumbed to her injuries two days later and the adult male refused treatment for his burns. An origin and cause examination was conducted by MCFRS Fire and Explosive Investigations. The findings of that examination indicated that the fire started in the kitchen when the adult female victim’s lightweight cotton night shirt was ignited while cooking breakfast over a gas-fired stove. The victim traveled from the kitchen into the living room area trailing burning clothing behind her and in the process, setting the couch on fire.

Damage to the structure was negligible.

Structure/Site Layout

- The structure at 8517 11th Avenue was built in 1952 and is one of many, 2-story duplex style homes in the area.
- The duplexes in this area are generally small in size with only two bedrooms.
- The structure involved in this incident had approximately 830 square feet of total living space area and was Type III construction.
- The first floor was limited to a small kitchen area in the rear and a combined dining/living room area towards the front of the occupancy.
- All sleeping quarters were located on the second floor.



The 11th Avenue neighborhood is full of 2-story duplex structures.



The fire building – the incident occurred in the unit on the right.



From the outside, there is little evidence of a fatal fire having occurred here.

Fire Code History

- A review of the past and current fire code requirements for the structure revealed no code compliance issues.

Communications

- There were no communications issues during this incident.
- VRS was not needed, nor was it engaged.

Pre-Emergency Planning

- There were no pre-fire plans for the structure.
- The operations at this fire did not require any special pre-fire plans.

On Scene Operations

- This house fire incident was really more of a medical event than a building fire. However, there were four occupants at home at the time of the fire so it was important to verify their status and to confirm that the fires were out.
- First arriving crews quickly recognized the seriousness of the injuries and immediately switched to a “patient care” mode of operation.
- The two small fires in the duplex were extinguished using a pressurized water fire extinguisher from T716.
- Command was established by E702 in the Attack Mode and was transferred to BC701 upon his arrival.

- Upon the arrival of BC701, the adult female burn victim was already in the patient care compartment of A702 and crews were reporting the fires out in the duplex.
- The adult male had second degree burns to his arms and hands but refused treatment and transport after a lengthy attempt to convince him otherwise.
- The incident was broken into the following groups/divisions: Fire Attack Group and EMS Group.
- There were no apparatus access or placement issues; there were no water supply issues.

Staging

- Staging was not needed as the incident was downsized rather quickly once the fire was confirmed out.

Support Functions

- The support functions needed were minimal. E702 remained on the scene to assist FEI with investigation needs.
- M844 had left their unit on the scene when their crew boarded A702 for the transport to the burn center. E716 was able to take M844's unit back to Station 2 where it was secured until the crew was returned.
- There were no equipment or apparatus failures.

Safety Group

- A702 was initially assigned as the Standby Team but had to quickly divert to patient care. This placed the incident into the "Rescue Mode" and no company replaced A702 as the Standby Team.
- Because the two small fires were extinguished very quickly, a RIC or RIG was never established.

Investigations

- The origin of fire was located in the kitchen where the adult female had been cooking breakfast. Apparently, her loose fitting, lightweight cotton nightshirt was ignited by the gas flame on the left front burner of the stove.
- The victim's adult son was on the second floor at the time of the fire and was alerted to the fire by his mother's screams. When he came downstairs he found his mother in the living room with her entire nightshirt engulfed in flame. He proceeded to smother the fire by wrapping her in layers of clothing and removed her to the front porch and waited for help to arrive.

- The fire in the living room was caused by flaming scraps of clothing falling off of the victim as she passed by the couch.



Ignition occurred at the left front burner.



There was limited evidence of fire in the kitchen.



Once on fire, the victim headed toward the front door.



Burning garment remnants ignited the corner of the couch.

Lessons Learned

- The first arriving engine company officer (E702) provided a very good on-scene report, established command, and initiated action that resulted in the rapid identification and treatment of a critically burned patient.
- Ambulance 702's crew did a great job of transitioning from a Standby Team to a primary care provider team. The ambulance

crew was in the process of getting dressed-out for Standby Team work when they realized they had a critically injured patient. They quickly transitioned to providing BLS care and moved the victim to the patient care compartment of A702.

- Having an AFRA (PE716) as part of the original house fire assignment made a huge difference in terms of how fast an ALS provider was available to assist with patient care. PE716's ALS provider was able to begin care prior to the arrival of M844.
- The adult female victim (67 years old) had more than 30% 3rd degree burns involving her upper torso. She also had thermal trauma involving her airway. While the outcome of the incident resulted in a fatality, the quick work of A702, PE716, and M844's care providers gave the victim much needed advanced life support care. Unfortunately, her injuries were just too severe.

Units on Incident

1st Alarm

E702, PE716, PE844, PE712, PE719
T834, T716
RS801
A702
BC701
BC702
DC700
SA700

Conclusion

While the incident resulted in a civilian fire death, the actions taken by the first arriving units were timely, coordinated, and appropriate. The incident reinforced the advantage of ALS provider deliver by fire truck and the use of cross-trained personnel.

Because this event was a fatal fire involving an elderly resident, MCFRS must continue with a robust campaign to educate the County's senior population about the risks of fire in the home.